

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 1-704

MAY 2, 2005

***Administrative and Management
Administrative Controls***

National Weather Service Travel and Purchase Card/Convenience Check Program

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

OPR: CFO3 (B. Downs)

Certified by: CFO3 (N. Leivers)

Type of Issuance: Routine

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: These revisions supercede *NWSI 1-704, National Weather Service Travel and Purchase Card/Convenience Check Program*, Dated April 4, 2004

<u>signed</u>	<u>April 18, 2005</u>
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National Weather Service Travel and Purchase Card Program

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1. Introduction: The purpose of this procedure is to give guidance and information regarding the NWS Travel and Purchase Card/Convenience Check Program. The guidance listed in this procedure is in accordance with all GSA, DOC and NOAA regulations.

2. Government Travel Card Programs. The Contractor-Issued Government Travel Card Program was developed as an aid to employees who are frequent travelers. The Government supplies the credit card to be used for official travel only. This credit card enables employees to obtain cash advances, pay for hotels, meals, taxis, etc. Employees are personally responsible for the charges made on the card and are also responsible for paying Citibank in a timely manner. Employees should file vouchers immediately upon their return from travel so that reimbursement is received in time to pay the Citibank bill when it arrives.

The National Weather Service (NWS) follows all NOAA regulations and policies for the DOC/NOAA Travel Card Program.

The NWS has established a standard monthly card limit (\$5,000) and ATM limit (20%). These limits can be raised or lowered depending upon the need of the cardholder and at the request of the supervisor or Office/Regional focal point.

The NWS reviews inactive accounts, closes accounts and may further reduce monthly limits as needed.

NWS requires all cardholders and supervisors to annually complete the NWS online travel card training. Documentation to back up this requirement will be maintained at the office level. Reports of annual training should be sent to the Office/Regional level. When annual training is completed, Offices/Regions will report completion of training for all cardholders and supervisors to the NWS A/OPC. The NWS A/OPC will issue a date of completion within a reasonable time frame each year.

2.1 Approving Agency/Organization Program Coordinator. NWS has its own Approving Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC). All applications, maintenance changes, corrections, deletions and closures must be processed through the NWS A/OPC. The NWS A/OPC currently is Beth Downs, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Management and Organization (W/CF03). Applications and maintenance forms for the travel card can be faxed to 301-713-0347 or you can reach the A/OPC by email at Beth.Downs@noaa.gov. Employees outside NWS headquarters area may be required to follow regional guidance for submitting applications. Check with your FMC contact.

2.1.1 Application Forms. Citibank will not accept any applications or maintenance forms without the NWS A/OPC's signature. NOAA Travel will not process any applications or maintenance forms for NWS employees. In the absence of the current NWS A/OPC, *RUSH* requests should be routed to Bonnie Maynard, W/CF03, fax: 301-713-0347 or Bonnie.Maynard@noaa.gov.

2.1.2 Web site. More information on the travel card can be found on the CFO Web site at: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/cfo/tpc/travel_card_program.htm. All forms mentioned in this Instruction can be found at this Web site and are in PDF format.

2.1.3 Focal Points. Focal Points for each NWS Office/Region have been established. These focal points are responsible for reviewing Citibank monthly reports for delinquent and declined (or misused) accounts, contacting cardholders/supervisors for information and status of their delinquent or declined account, and reporting status to NWS A/OPC for each monthly report received. Focal Points also act as liaison between NWS A/OPC and individual cardholders as needed.

Focal Points for individual NWS offices are (this information will be updated on a semi-annual basis):

Headquarters:

AA/CFO/CIO - Beth Downs

W/OS - Les Taylor/Diane Savoy

W/OHD - Patricia Rust

W/OST - Jim Valdez

W/OPS - Lynn Hodges/Keyannia Rich

Regions:

W/ER - David Bosakowski

W/CR - Vicky Alexander

W/SR - Camille Dyer

W/WR - Brian Sadler

W/AR - Anne Barnes

W/PR - Jean Okumura

W/NP - Dennis Staley/Sue Perrotta

2.2 NOAA Policy and Procedures. The NWS follows NOAA Travel Handbook Exhibit 301-10A, Policy and Procedures for use of the Contractor-Issued Government Travel Card. As stated in the Introduction, the only change to these regulations is NWS has its own A/OPC. The NOAA Travel Regulations regarding the Contractor-Issued Government Travel Card can be found at: www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7Efinance/TRAVEL.htm . Go to Citibank Travel Card Regulations.

2.2.1 Regulations. Regulations are written by GSA stating use of the Government Issued Credit Card is mandatory unless exemptions are authorized. To find these regulations, using Internet Explorer, go to: www.gsa.gov click on Policy in the bar along the top of the page, click on Travel when the drop down box appears. In the middle of that page, click on the link for the Federal Travel Regulations; the next page has links on the left, click on Chapter 301. Find Part 301-51.

2.3 Applying for a Travel Charge Card.

- a. Supervisor determines necessity of travel card for employee. This decision is based on the employee's job description and need for travel in that job. DOC policy currently states the use of a travel card is mandatory for an employee who travels 5 or more times a year. Infrequent travelers may have a travel card. This should be an employee supervisor decision.
- b. Employee and supervisor read the NOAA travel regulations (derived from the Federal Travel Regulations) regarding the use of the Contractor-Issued Government Travel Card. It is of utmost importance for the supervisor and employee to not only read the regulations, but adhere to and follow them explicitly. Employees are expected to fully comply with the regulations.
- c. Employee and supervisor sign the Employee Acknowledgment Statement and Approving Official Certification Statement. Both signatures verify the employee and supervisor have read and understand the regulations. In the event of misuse, this acknowledgment statement will be used as a legal document on the Government's behalf. The supervisor is required to ensure that policies and procedures are clearly communicated.

2.4 Completing a Travel Card Application. Employee fills out the Citibank Individually Billed Travel Card Application. Instructions for filling out the form can be found on the CFO travel card program Web page at: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/cfo/tpc/travel_card_program.htm

- a. Employee takes NWS online training for the Travel Card and prints the certificate. Employee will use their email logon name (ex: uncle.sam) and their email password to gain access. Training is located at: <https://bestpractices.nws.noaa.gov/contents/travel/index.php>.

- b. The application, Employee Acknowledgment Statement and NWS Certificate of Completion are faxed to the NWS A/OPC at 301-713-0347. Check with the FMC contact for regional guidelines.
- c. If there is an urgent need for a travel card, specify travel date.

2.5 Maintaining Citibank Account Information. To maintain your travel card account, use the Citibank Maintenance form to make name changes, address (home and office) changes, phone number changes, account closures, etc.

- a. Section 1: Fill in the full account number and the name as it appears on the card.
- b. Section 2: Check **only** the areas to be changed. If changing an address, phone number, or making a name change, check the first box labeled Cardholder Information Changes.
- c. Section 3: Fill in **only** the information to be changed. Do not fill in the entire section.
- d. Section 4: This area will only be used if the cardholder moves from one NOAA Line Office to another and will be filled in by the NWS A/OPC.
- e. Sections 5, 6 and 7: The A/OPC completes these sections and signs Section 7. If an approving official signs, the A/OPC will delete that signature.
- f. Fax the maintenance form to the NWS A/OPC at 301-713-0347.

2.6 Disputing Charges to Your Citibank Account.

- a. If the bill from Citibank for your travel card includes charges you did not make, call the customer service number found on the back of your card (1-800-790-7206) **immediately**, select Option 2 for Government accounts.
- b. Contact the vendor who has made the incorrect charge and have them credit your account. If the vendor will not cooperate and issue a credit, you are responsible for filling out a Dispute Form and faxing it directly to Citibank.
- c. The Dispute form should be **faxed to 1-904-954-8710, Attn: Dispute Division**. DO NOT fax travel card dispute forms to the Commerce Bankcard Center. Citibank requests that travel card dispute forms be faxed to them. In addition, dispute forms should include a **written statement** explaining why the charge is in dispute and what steps were taken to correct the problem. The dispute form can be found at: <http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/forms.html>.

2.7 Disciplinary Action/Timeline for Billing. Citibank is supplying Office/Regional focal points with monthly reports to enable them to monitor delinquent activity of their employees' accounts. It is important that all Offices/Regions take appropriate action against employees who abuse or misuse the travel card or who do not adhere to travel card regulations and policies. At this time, NWS follows the travel card misconduct table issued by DOC in January 2001, and will ensure that Offices/Regions will be updated on any changes to the travel card misconduct table.

2.7.1 Citibank Timeline for Billing. The Commerce Bankcard Center has published a Citibank Timeline that outlines billing times and payment due dates. It can be found at: www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7efinance/CITI.htm. Go to Citibank Travel Card Delinquency Timeline.

2.7.2 DAO 202-751. DOC has supplied provisions for disciplinary action currently based on DAO 202-751 (Exhibit 5). This DAO can be accessed at: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/bmi/daos/202-751.htm>.

2.8 Request for Reinstatement in Event of Cancellation. In the event of cancellation by Citibank, a request for consideration of reinstatement can be made via the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for NWS.

2.8.1 Submitting the Request. The following steps are in place with NWS Headquarters to submit these requests. The Office/Regional Directors Administrative Officer will maintain specific procedures.

- a. Employee submits written explanation to immediate supervisor.
- b. Supervisor submits recommendation and copy of employee's explanation to Office/Regional Director.
- c. Office/Regional Director submits written request to NWS CFO via the NWS A/OPC. Written requests should include:
 1. Explanation of events leading to cancellation.
 2. Explanation of disciplinary action taken by supervisor.
 3. Written statement by supervisor/Director guaranteeing that monthly review of account will be conducted.
- d. NWS A/OPC will compile the information for the CFO and prepare a letter to Citibank for CFO signature.

3. Purchase Card and Convenience Checks. The Commerce Acquisition Manual, Chapter (CAM) 1313.301 describes the goals of the Department of Commerce (DOC) Purchase Card Program as "to improve mission support, streamline the placement of micro-purchases and reduce administrative costs and paperwork, while ensuring adherence to Federal Acquisition regulations."

3.1 Policies and Procedures. All policies, procedures, responsibilities and guidance contained herein are in strict accordance with CAM 1313.301 and can be found at:
http://oamweb.ossec.doc.gov/docs/CAM_1313.301.pdf.

3.1.1 NWS Focal Points. NWS focal points are responsible for determining the need for a purchase card/convenience check account, ensuring that all DOC regulations (including the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR)) are followed regarding these accounts, ensure there is no misuse and maintenance of files is complete.

3.2 Applying for a Purchase Card. Procedures for applying for and maintaining the purchase card differ per Headquarters and regional offices. If you are unsure of procedures for your office, ask the focal point listed below. These contacts are responsible for ensuring all purchase card applicants are applying at the supervisors request, receive necessary training, are aware of and follow regulations, and that each cardholder is not abusing the purchase card.

Headquarters:

AA/CFO/CIO - Beth Downs

W/OS - Les Taylor/Diane Savoy

W/OHD - Patricia Rust

W/OST - James Valdez

W/OPS - Lynn Hodges/Keyannia Rich

Regional contacts:

W/ER - David Bosakowski

W/CR - Vicky Alexander/Mark Edzards

W/SR - Camille Dyer/Lily Garcia

W/WR - Brian Sadler

WAR - Anne Barnes

W/PR - Jean Okumura

W/NP - Dennis Staley/Joyce Peters

3.3 Resources:

3.3.1 CAM 1313.301. CAM 1313.301 covers DOC and NOAA Purchase Card Procedures. Section 1 of CAM 1313.301 contains a Program Overview which includes an Introduction, Policy, Definitions, Roles, and Responsibilities.

3.3.2 CAM 1313.301-Section 2. This section includes instructions on Obtaining/Maintaining a Purchase Card. For assistance, contact your current Focal Point or the Commerce Bankcard Center at: <http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/bankcard.html>.

3.3.3 CAM 1313.301-Section 3. This section, "Operational Guidance and Procedures," includes information on general use of the Purchase Card, Dollar Values, Allowable Purchases, Restrictions, Convenience Checks, and Procedural Guidance.

3.3.4 CAM 1313.301-Section 4. This section, Program Review, contains information on Annual Reports made by Department of Commerce.

3.3.5 Attachments to CAM 1313.301. The attachments are:

- A Documentation for Orders over \$2,500
- B Required Sources of Supply
- C Purchase Card Ordering Log
- D Convenience Check Log
- E Annual Purchase Card Report (Sample Format)

3.4 Training. When applying for a purchase card, potential cardholders must read the CAM 1313.301 and take the GSA online training found at: <http://www.fss.gsa.gov/webtraining/trainingdocs/smartpaytraining/index.cfm>. Employee will fill out the Citibank Purchase card setup form and send it and a copy of the GSA training certificate to your ASC or through your office/regional focal point.

3.5 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). The Commerce Bankcard Center (CBC) website lists a few FAQs at: <http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/faq.html>.

3.6 Tax Exemption. The CBC has a link to a GSA website that contains tax exempt letters from almost every state in the U.S. This information can be found at: http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/tax_exempt.html. Printing and using these letters may prove helpful to purchase cardholders. In addition, newly issued purchase cards have the DOC tax exempt number on them.

3.7 Forms. Forms are available on the CBC website at: <http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/forms.html>. This location includes forms such as:

- a. Government Purchase Card Set-Up Form
- b. Government Purchase or Travel Card Maintenance Form (can be used for either card)
- c. Government Approving Official Set-up/Maintenance Form
- d. Government Cardholder Dispute Form
- e. Purchase Card Ordering Log Form

In addition, NWS requires individuals use the form in Appendix A (or a similar form) to determine whether or not necessary supplies can be purchased from priority sources of supply or if another source is needed. It is mandatory this decision be made before making purchases and this documentation is maintained in the file with the purchasing receipts. The CBC has a section titled Required Sources of Supply. It gives information on vendors and gives links to their Web sites. This section can be found at: <http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/rss.htm>.

3.8 Commerce Purchase Card System (CPCS). All cardholders must use the CPCS for reconciliation of their monthly charges. NOAA will not accept paper statements for purchases on the purchase card.

3.8.1 Employee Responsibilities. The employee is responsible for reconciling charges by the due date given each month by NOAA Finance. Employees are also responsible for ensuring the correct accounting codes per purchase are used in reconciliation in CPCS, they maintain the order log, and include required property information for purchases when applicable.

3.8.2 Supervisor/Approving Official Responsibilities. The supervisor/approving official is responsible for approving and forwarding all reconciled purchases to the CPCS system, by the monthly due date.

3.8.3 Effects of Long Term Non-Reconciliation. Employees cards may be cancelled by NOAA in the event that long term reconciliation is not accomplished. Purchases for that office would then have to be made by a different cardholder.

3.8.4 DAO 202-751. DOC has supplied provisions for disciplinary action currently based on DAO 202-751 (Exhibit 5). This DAO can be accessed at:
<http://www.ossec.doc.gov/bmi/daos/202-751.htm>.

3.8.5 CPCS Training. Training for CPCS at NWS headquarters and NCEP can be arranged by contacting the CPCS Team at 301-427-1009 or at ClientServices@noaa.gov. Training for regions can be arranged through your regional offices and/or ASCs.

3.9 CitiDirect Access. Citibank has a system in place that all cardholders and approving officials can access to check and review their current account status and past account history. To set up access, visit this CBC site: <http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/citidirect.htm>.

3.10 Record Retention. The NOAA Finance Office/Comptroller issued a memo dated September 18, 2001, offering guidance on procedures for processing purchase card documents and the retention of the purchase card statements at remote locations. The guidance is as follows:

Procedures for Processing Purchase Card Documents:

1. The cardholder or group administrator reconciles the Statement of Account online in CPCS.
2. The cardholder signs the hard-copy Statement of Account.
3. The cardholder forwards the signed Statement of Account with supporting documentation (purchase order log and original receipts) to the approving official within 5 days, according to CAM requirements.
4. The approving official reviews and approves the reconciled transaction in CPCS no later than 15 days after the cardholder receives the Statement of Account, according to CAM requirements.
5. The approving official signs the hard-copy Statement of Account.
6. The approving official files the signed Statement of Account with the supporting documentation in a secure location.
7. The servicing Finance Office may select random samples of these payments

transactions to verify the validity of the payments and the compliance with records retention policies.

Document Retention Requirements

1. Approving Officials are designated as the document retention officials for purchase card documentation and are to be responsible for maintaining supporting documentation.
2. The Statement of Account and supporting documentation are defined as accountable officer's records. In accordance with General Records Schedule 6, National Archives and Records Administration and General Accounting Office guidance, Title 8, Records Management, "Policy and Procedures Manual for Guidance of Federal Agencies; these documents must be retained for a period of six (6) years and three (3) months. Specifics can be found at: <http://ardor.nara.gov/grs/grs06.html>. Additional guidance can be found in the DOC "Accounting Principles and Standards Handbook," Chapter 15, Records Management at: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/ofm/acctg/cover.htm>.
3. Approving officials must retain their records for annual review by the contracting office as required by the CAM.

3.11 Convenience Checks. Imprest Fund VISA Checks were established by NOAA as an alternative method to accomplishing cash transactions. This allows NOAA to decrease the number of imprest funds and promote good cash management.

3.11.1 Guidelines-Establishing a Check Account. NOAA guidelines state that VISA check accounts may only be established when it is necessary for a "cash" environment to operate. Accounts may be established in those instances where (1) the vendor will not accept purchase orders or the Government Purchase Card, (2) vendors require payment by cash or check; (3) vendors do not have the capability to bill the agency, and/or (4) unusual operating conditions preclude conventional disbursing methods.

3.11.2 NOAA Regulations. As noted by NOAA (RJ Dominic memo, dated July 31, 2002), and NWS: VISA checks **may not be issued** for the following:

1. Travel advances
2. Vendor accepts the Government Purchase Card, Purchase Orders, Blanket Purchase Agreements, or the item is offered through GSA
3. Interim receipts prior to the purchase being made
4. Cash in Your Account
5. Reimbursement to an employee for a work-related purchase or local travel
6. Personal use
7. Multiple checks on the same day to the same payee
8. Recurring payment to the same payee

9. Payments to Federal agencies and universities

3.11.3 Process for Establishing an Account. Establishing a VISA checking account is accomplished by the same method as the Purchase card account by filling out the Government Purchase Card Set-up Form and the Approving Official Set-up Form (unless there is an existing approving official). These forms should be sent to the ASC from NWS regions through the NWS focal points listed above.

3.11.4 Account Holder Responsibilities. Account holder responsibility is as follows:

1. Secure checks in a lock box or locked file cabinet
2. Ensure that checks are safeguarded as they would cash
3. Maintain a check register
4. Provide proper documentation (receipts)
5. Review monthly account statement
6. Ensure that approving official is provided with certified statement and backup documents within 5 workdays after receipt.
7. Maintain copies of all statements and documents for 6 years and 3 months.

3.11.5 Approving Official Responsibilities. The approving official is responsible for:

1. Ensuring the checks are only issued for official Government business
2. Verifying that each check issued was both necessary and in compliance with DOC policy
3. Reconciles the account holder's statement
4. Review the statement to ensure items approved for payment have been received and that correct accounting is used.
5. Review should ensure that checks are only used when alternative methods are impractical
6. Original VISA Check statement and receipts should be forwarded to the appropriate ASC Finance Division as stated in the VISA check procedures at: http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/imprest_fund.htm.

NOAA states that any misuse of the checks will result in the immediate closure of the account and that the account holder will be held responsible for any fraud resulting from his/her negligence.

VISA checks are not issued to the NWS Headquarters offices. If a purchase cardholder finds the need, after careful review, for a VISA check, they should contact the NOAA/NWS Procurement office for advice and necessary steps to have a check issued.

For more detailed information on DOC/NOAAs policy for Imprest Fund VISA checks procedures, see the CBC website at: http://casc.noaa.gov/bankcard/imprest_fund.htm.

3.12 Newsletter. The CBC web site maintains a monthly newsletter section. It reports on updates, progress, changes and information to the Purchase Card Program. It includes

information in areas such as Fraud, CitiDirect, Internet charges and maintenance.

Appendix A

JUSTIFICATION FOR NOT USING REQUIRED SOURCE FOR SUPPLIES

Cardholder Name:

Purchase Card Number:

Line Item Number:

Check All That Apply:

_____ Supply item needed today and would not be received from required source vendor in time.

_____ Supply item was not available from required source vendor.

_____ Supply item was out of stock.

_____ Quality of supply item sold by required source vendor is very poor.

_____ Supply item was purchased at a lesser price than the required source vendor and was of the same quality.

_____ Other: (explain)

Signature of Cardholder: _____ Date: _____